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MUHAMMAD IQBĀL AND ATATÜRK'S REFORMS

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TURKEY and her fortunes occupied an important place in the thought of Muhammad Iqbāl (1877–1938), as it did for most Indian Muslims and their leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only the seat of the Caliphate,[1] it was the only Muslim country that had managed to preserve its independence in the face of European colonialism. For Muḥammad Iqbāl, in whose philosophy individual and collective freedom occupied a place of central importance, as it was a *sine qua non* for the development of proper human self-hood (*khudī*), Turkey's independence meant the ground from which a new Islamic self-hood could originate. Hence, it is not surprising that Iqbāl addressed a poem to Atatürk in July 1922, just after the Turks defeated the Greeks (in 1921). Because this poem presupposes knowledge of and actually applies Iqbāl's basic philosophy, initially formulated in his *Asrār-i Khudī*,[2] I shall analyze the latter briefly here. We shall need this analysis further as we try to understand Iqbāl's later statements on Atatürk and his reforms, for if these statements are considered in isolation, without reference to this philosophical background, they appear quite contradictory.

A translation of the poem follows.[3]

It was a simple, unlettered man (i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad) thanks to
Whose wisdom, we (Muslims) became intimate with the secret workings of destiny.
While in our origin we were a mere well-nigh extinguished spark,
Thanks to his one glance we became a globe-enveloping sun.
But the Shaikh of the Ḥaram[4] has washed this secret of Love off his heart
And thus we earned disgrace in the world in the measure of our shortcomings.
The wind of the desert agrees with our natural temperament—
The garden breeze only turned us into a bud coiled upon itself.
Alas! that tumultuous uproar which pierced through the canopy of the heavens,
Turned into a groan when we became caught up in (considerations of) high and low.
How much game we put into our saddlebag without a net;
But then we became victims of our own game while equipped with arrows and bows!
"Let your horse run over whatever comes in its path—
Because with our planning we have often been beaten in this arena."[5]

[1] The Indian reaction to the abolition of this institution will be treated in a forthcoming article by Professor C. M. Naim.

[2] Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Asrār-i Khudī*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1920; New Delhi, 1978).

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[3] Iqbal, *Kullīyāt-i Iqbāl Farisi* [Iqbāl's collected poems in Persian] (Lahore, 1973), p. 308.

[4] This is a typical way in which Iqbāl criticizes the Islamic religious leadership, whom he accused of being devoid of intellectual and spiritual boldness and creativity.

[5] This verse is a quotation from the famous Persian poet Nazīrī Nīshāpurī's poetry (d. 1612); see his *Diwān* (Tehran, 1340 [1961]), p. 305. The idea is that especially in times of crisis, it is not rational, deliberate planning that works but a non-calculating bold "rush" into things: only love, not cold reason can conquer apparently insurmountable difficulties.

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As stated above, for Iqbāl, the development and realization of self-hood is the goal of life. This is an unceasing, eternal process and implies a dynamic, creative motion. Iqbāl calls this creative process Love (*ʿIshq*), which is the vital force he continually places in opposition to rational behavior. The evolution of life, at its crucial moments of upward motion, occurs, not through intellectual and rational actions (which are necessary mainly to manipulate the environment) but, rather, through vital leaps, as it were. Near the end of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* we read: "The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego and sharpens its will with the creative assurance that the world is not something to be merely seen or known through concepts, but something to be made and remade by continuous action."[6]

After Turkey's defeat in World War I, the victorious Allies planned the parceling up of Turkey. In Istanbul, the Sultan, Muḥammad VI, felt helpless and was forced to accept and abide by the terms of the armistice. His Shaikh al-Islām produced a *fatwā* supporting the Sultan's stance. In Iqbālian terms, this decision was one of *ʿAql*, "the way of reason," since the Sultan, after rational calculation, felt himself obliged to accept the Allies' humiliating terms. Mustafa Kemal, however, chose the way of *ʿIshq*, "creative love." He decided to face and overcome the most formidable odds rather than succumb to them, and, with the aid of sympathetic and like-minded forces, turned Turkey from a helpless, defeated nation into an independent and sovereign power. To use a metaphor Iqbāl often used in his poetry, while the Sultan behaved like a fox or a pigeon, Kemal conducted himself like a tiger or a falcon, and thus we see the contrast between reason and all-absorbing love. Actually, *ʿIshq*, according to Iqbāl, is a force which generates its own reason, which subserves it. Borrowed rationality cannot subserve the purposes of *ʿIshq*, but, rather, destroys it. Thus while *ʿIshq* perfects self-hood, borrowed rationality negates it and becomes suitable only to the slave mentality. The rise and decline of Islam further illustrates this concept. It was an unlettered prophet who had taught Muslims *ʿIshq*, transforming a primitive, unsophisticated Arab people into a world power which at once conquered, ruled, and civilized. But later, falling into the crafty artfulness of reason, the Muslims lost hold of initiative and creativity and the "Shaikh of the Ḥaram" himself, i.e., the Shaikh al-Islām, lost *ʿIshq*. With *ʿIshq*, Muslims conquered the world for Islam with a minimum of military force. When they lost *ʿIshq* and fell into the trivialities of reason, they lost everything; above all, they lost self-hood. It was men like Mustafa Kemal who once again blazed the trail for Muslims that they might regain their self-hood through a recultivation of *ʿIshq*.

On 3 March 1924, however, Kemal abolished the Caliphate, thus signaling the nationalist isolation of Turkey from the rest of the Muslim world. He removed Islam as the basis of the state and substituted secularism. A program of wholesale Westernization was undertaken as he prohibited the teaching of religion in the public education system and even banned the teaching of Arabic. In light of the brief remarks above, Iqbāl's negative reaction to these acts come as no surprise. What Iqbāl had found

[6] Iqbāl, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, 1960), p. 198.

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wrong with the West was basically its secularism which compartmentalized life into "private" religion and public affairs (conduct of state).

It was this dualism that had resulted in the loss of genuine ethical values in the West, creating, in his view, a "heartless" and "Godless" state and society: pure *ʿAql* or rational cleverness was substituted for *ʿIshq* which alone could create serious purposes of life for man. Regarding the West, he says, for example:

If you do not mind my saying so, this saline soil (of Western secularism)
Is unsuited for the sprouting forth of the seed of human purposes.
Should, from this barren piece of earth,
A single heart grow, consider it a great wonder.[7]

Thus, in his *Jāvīd Nāma*, Iqbāl denounces Atatürk for his Westernization policy: the man who had appeared the embodiment of *ʿIshq* a short while before, turned out to be easy prey for the West. In the *Jāvīd Nāma* (a poem of journey into the heavens in the style of Dante), Iqbāl is instructed in the dangers of secularism and Kemal's adoption of it by the Ottoman grand vizier Saʿīd Halīm Pāshā (d. 1921) who is in the company of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897) in heaven:

For the West it is the cleverness of reason that is the source of life;
For the (Muslim) East, *ʿIshq* yields the secrets of Being.
Through *ʿIshq* alone does rationality come into intimacy with Truth (God);
And the achievements of *ʿIshq* gain firmness through rationality.
When *ʿIshq* becomes a comrade of rationality
It structures the world entirely anew.

Mustafa Kemal, who sang songs of modernization,
Ordered all traces of the past to be obliterated.
The Kaʿba's furniture of life cannot be renovated
by importing new Lāt and Manāt[8] from the West.
The Turk's lyre is empty of any new tune—
Its new is nothing but the old of the West.
His breast could afford no new breath,
His mind could conceive no new world.
Inevitably, he compromised with the existing world
He melted like wax under its burning impact.
If you possess the heart of a Muslim,
Look into your own heart and into the Qurʾān.
A hundred new worlds lie within its verses,
Whole ages lie folded up in its moments.
A man of faith himself is among the signs of God (like the verses of the Qurʾān),
Every world is like a cloak upon his shoulders.
When one age becomes decrepit upon his body,
The Qurʾān can yield him a new one.[9]

Thus because *ʿAql* is a mere manipulator of the present and *ʿIshq* the creator of the future, Turkey's simple adoption of Western secularism and its laws and state ideology

[7] Idem, *Kulliyāt*, p. 597.
[8] Two pre-Islamic Arab goddesses.
[9] Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt*, pp. 653–54.

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was, in the Islamic view, a tragedy: a nation that had led others in the past had now become an imitator.

The third and most positive phase of Iqbāl's evaluation of what the Turks had done and achieved can be found in Iqbāl's *Reconstruction.* I recall reading about Mustafa Kemal in a Lahore daily newspaper at the time of his death (Iqbāl and Kemal died in April and November 1938, respectively) that he was once told, while on a sea-side holiday, about Iqbāl's sharp criticism of his governmental policies. Kemal replied, "Let Iqbāl first liberate his people from British rule and then we can talk!" Ironically, this reply is an invitation to Iqbāl to perform the same feat of *ʿIshq* which Iqbāl had praised Kemal for: his liberation of Turkey from the Allies.

In the sixth chapter of *Reconstruction* entitled "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam" in which he formulates his principle of forward movement and positive growth in Islam, Iqbāl discusses at length the contributions of modern Turkey with great appreciation. Of course, he does not accept the idea of the separation of religion and state:

> In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character. An act is temporal or profane if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity. In Islam it is the same reality which appears as the Church looked at from one point of view and the State from another. It is not true to say that the Church and the State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies. The point is extremely far-reaching and a full elucidation of it will involve us in a highly philosophical discussion. Suffice it to say that this ancient mistake arose out of the bifurcation of the unity of man into two distinct and separate realities which somehow have a point of contact, but which are in essence opposed to each other. The truth, however, is that matter is spirit in space-time reference. The unity called man is body when you look at it as acting in regard to what we call the external world; it is mind or soul when you look at it as acting. The essence of "Tauhid" as a working idea is equality, solidarity, and freedom. The State, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization. It is in this sense alone that the State in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it is headed by a representative of God on earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility. The critics of Islam have lost sight of this important consideration. The ultimate Reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being.[10]

He tells us that the work of Islamic reconstruction does not mean a mere adjustment to modern conditions but a new interpretation of the inner meaning of Islam. This means not just constructing great idealistic systems of thought but at the same time an inner commitment to shape the world in accordance with democratic spiritual principles. Modern Europe, he feels, has constructed such systems, but all of them are only intellectual constructs—*ʿAql* devoid of *ʿIshq*. Once again he restates his faith in Turkey's ability to achieve this Islamic task and, quoting a French writer, calls her "the

[10] Idem, *Reconstruction*, pp. 154–55.

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element of stability in the world of Islam."[11] In other words, Turkey, Muslim at heart, will turn the Western legacy in a new Islamic direction. Having criticized the views of the Nationalist Party, which advocated a division of Church and state, Iqbāl proceeds to give a brief summary of the views of Saʿīd Ḥalīm Pāshā (the grand vizier of Turkey) as representative of the Religious Reform Party. According to this school of thought, Islam represents a positive culture based on science and informed by universal ethical values. It deplores the fact that Islam, throughout its history, has been steadily de-Islamicized: on the one hand, it has lost its positive character and has sunk into a morass of negative and reactionary forces; on the other, it has become more distinctly Iranian, Turkish, or Arab and has thus been practically robbed of its universality. Iqbāl then comments:

> You will see that following a line of thought more in tune with the spirit of Islam, he reaches practically the same conclusion as the Nationalist Party, that is to say, the freedom of Ijtihad with a view to rebuild the law of Shariʿat in the light of modern thought and experience.
>
> Let us now see how the Grand National Assembly has exercised this power of Ijtihad in regard to the institution of Khilafat. According to Sunni Law the appointment of an Imam or Khalifa is absolutely indispensable. The first question that arises in this connexion is this: should the Caliphate be vested in a single person? Turkey's Ijtihad is that according to the spirit of Islam the Caliphate or Imamate can be vested in a body of persons, or an elected Assembly. The religious doctors of Islam in Egypt and India, so far as I know, have not yet expressed themselves on this point. Personally, I believe the Turkish view is perfectly sound. It is hardly necessary to argue this point. The republican form of government is not only thoroughly consistent with the spirit of Islam, but has also become a necessity in view of the new forces that are set free in the world of Islam.[12]

In the end Iqbāl hails Turkey as the harbinger of a creative future for Islam in words that ring with unmitigated hope and enthusiasm:

> The truth is that among the Muslim nations of today, Turkey alone has shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained to self-consciousness. She alone has claimed her right of intellectual freedom; she alone has passed from the ideal to the real—a transition which entails keen intellectual and moral struggle. To her the growing complexities of a mobile and broadening life are sure to bring new situations suggesting new points of view, and necessitating fresh interpretations of principles which are only of an academic interest to a people who have never experienced the joy of spiritual expansion. It is, I think, the English thinker Hobbes who makes this acute observation that to have a succession of identical thoughts and feelings is to have no thoughts and feelings at all. Such is the lot of most Muslim countries today. They are mechanically repeating old values, whereas the Turk is on the way to creating new values. He has passed through great experiences which have revealed his deeper self to him. In him life has begun to move, change, and amplify, giving birth to new desires, bringing new difficulties and suggesting new interpretations. The question which confronts him today, and which is likely to confront other Muslim countries in the near future, is whether the Law of Islam is capable of evolution—a question which will require great intellectual effort, and is sure to be answered in the affirmative; provided the world of Islam approaches it in the spirit of Omar—the first critical and independent mind in Islam who, at the last moments of the Prophet, had the moral courage to utter these remarkable words: "The Book of God is sufficient for us."[13]

[11] Ibid., p. 179.
[12] Ibid., p. 157.
[13] Ibid., p. 162.

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Before concluding, mention must also be made of Iqbāl's tract entitled "Islam and Ahmadism" which he wrote in response to Jawaharlal Nehru's series of articles in the *Statesman* of Calcutta (occasioned by anti-Ahamdi riots in the early 1930s). Nehru had accused Iqbāl of having a reactionary outlook, with his return to religion (Nehru was an atheist), and stated that Atatürk had emancipated *his* people from religion and taken them on the road to progress. In this tract[14] Iqbāl strongly repudiates the idea that Islam is unprogressive and reaffirms the strongly forward, creative nature of Islam; far from escaping the material world, it seeks opportunities for fulfillment in it. Iqbāl once again denies that Turks have repudiated their religion and asserts that, on the contrary, they have moved towards a truer phase of Islam.

In conclusion, two observations need to be made or, rather, remade. Firstly, if Iqbāl's statements on Atatürk and Turkey are read in isolation, they appear blatantly contradictory: Turks are denounced as pure and pale imitators of the West, who have simply adopted secularism and turned their backs on the Qurʾān. Yet, upon closer examination, we see that Iqbāl actually finds both hope in and justification for developments in Turkey based on the fact that in the creative movement of *ʿIshq* there is always a destructive element involved—destructive, not of Islam but of a good many elements *in the historic past*. The hope rests on the fact that they cannot be simply Western because they are Muslims and possess an eternal revelation which will necessarily make their future different from that of the West. Thus the Turks are lauded as harbingers of change and pioneers of a fresh movement in the world of Islam that Iqbāl long yearned for. Secondly, Atatürk in his reply to Iqbāl, as stated above, based any fresh creativity in Islam on Muslim liberation from imperial rule. This, I must emphasize, is an idea that is close to Iqbāl's heart, for whom even the prayers of a Muslim in bondage are a purely meaningless, servile activity. Hence, Iqbāl, despite his disapproval of many of Atatürk's actual policies, was inevitably attracted to him at the same time, for the very *adhān* and *ʿibāda* of a slave people differ in meaning from that of those who are free![15]

[14] Idem, *Islam and Ahmadism* (Lahore, n.d.), pp. 34 ff.

[15] Idem, *Bāl-i Jibrīl* (Lahore, 1962), pp. 56–57. This idea is very common in Iqbāl's writings: "Unreliable is the perception of a slave, for only the vision of a free man can be trusted in this world" (ibid., p. 40). Again, "there is a world of difference between the *adhān* of a *mullā* and that of a *mujtahid*" (ibid., p. 208).

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